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Peter Boylan (Inouye): 202-617-7544

Jesse Broder Van Dyke (Akaka): 202-224-6361

## **HONOLULU RAIL TRANSIT PROJECT ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE UP TO \$510,000,000 IN FEDERAL FUNDS NEXT YEAR**

*November 29, 2011*

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Honolulu Rail Transit Project is eligible to receive up to \$510,000,000 in federal funds next year provided the City and County of Honolulu and the Federal Transit Administration sign a full-funding grant agreement by the end of 2012, Senate Committee on Appropriations Chairman Daniel K. Inouye and Senator Daniel K. Akaka announced today.

The rail funding is one example of several Hawaii projects receiving funding in fiscal year 2012 after President Barack Obama signed the Conference Report on H.R. 2112, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012. The U.S. Senate approved the Conference Report on H.R. 2112 by a vote of 70 to 30.

The legislation includes the Fiscal Year 2012 Agriculture/FDA, Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS), and Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations bills, as well as a short-term Continuing Resolution to fund the federal government through Friday, December 16.

The money for which Honolulu's rail project would be eligible "shall be available for preliminary engineering, final design, and construction of projects that receive a Full Funding Grant Agreement during calendar year 2012," according to the bill.

"Federal funds are hard to come by in the current budget climate and Honolulu has an opportunity to secure significant federal support for this long awaited project designed to help alleviate traffic on Oahu. Rail transit will create thousands of jobs and bring welcome relief to commuters who are forced to spend hours in their cars each day inching through congested roadways. We have planned this project and debated its merits for decades and we must move forward. We must set aside our differences and work together. I remain committed to this project and will continue to do everything I can to direct federal funds to the work and ensure its timely completion," said Senator Inouye.

"Hawaii must continue moving forward to secure available federal funding for the rail project. We need to take advantage of this tremendous opportunity to create jobs and improve transportation," said Senator Daniel K. Akaka. "I am also pleased that this legislation preserves support for Native Hawaiian housing, tsunami defense, law enforcement, and marine mammal protection, among many other important efforts. In particular, this bill responds to the concerns of two dozen of my Democratic and Republican colleagues, who joined me in requesting the reinstatement of housing counseling funding that was zeroed out last year."

In addition to money for rail, the measure also includes \$13 million for Native Hawaiian housing and \$386,000 for the Native Hawaiian Housing Loan Guarantee Fund. The \$386,000 translates into \$41,504,000 in loan authority for the program and includes language that will allow borrowers to refinance their mortgages, which they are not currently allowed to do.

The bill also includes \$1,456,083 for fruit fly eradication, minor crop pest control, papaya ring spot research, and sugarcane research. Native Hawaiian Serving Education grants received \$1,597,000, women and minorities in Science Technology Engineering and Math fields received \$400,000, and \$1,996,000 was provided to help geographically disadvantaged farmers and ranchers get their products to market.

There are also funds for marine mammal and sea turtle protection, climate research, marine debris cleanup, fishery maintenance, at-risk youth mentoring, and other programs.

"I am pleased that we have been able to maintain investments in several critical areas. The Conference Report represents thousands of compromises on issues large and small. It represents, in no small measure, the way the Congress of the United States is meant to function. This Conference Report is the culmination of a process that includes hearings, markups, debate, and negotiations, and posting online all of the hearing testimony and legislative text for any citizen to review. It represents the one essential ingredient to a functioning democracy that has been in short supply in recent months: compromise," said Senator Inouye. "These bills are focused on a number of basic priorities: job creation, public safety, science, nutrition, housing, and transportation. Due to the stringent funding limits included in the Budget Control Act, which established a discretionary spending level that is \$7 billion below last year's level, many items in these bills are not funded to the levels that I would prefer."

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